1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[p.86b] Sierra Tarascans

556 511 [669] Cherán, it is clear. Memories of the more violent revolutionary days are close enough that people conceal their wealth rather than display it. That this was not always the case is evidenced by the considerable number of ruined stone buildings, homes of the wealthy before the revolution. Today wealthy men live modestly. Their table differs primarily in quantity rather than in quality from that of the poor. Wealthy men dress like others, unless they are going to Uruapan or Zamora. Their wives wear better quality clothes, as a rule, than do other women, and on special occasions they display more and better jewelry. There [357] are few servants in Cherán, and their place is taken by dependent relatives or orphans who are members of the family.

The major methods of conspicuous expenditure acceptable in Cherán are quite stereotyped. Perhaps most common is to be sponsor of a moro dancer or to be responsible for some phase of a fiesta, posts assigned by the *municipio* rather than sought after by the individual. The ownership of cattle which can be used for cattle riding in the town fiesta is another socially approved method of ostentation. Ownership of a horse is also permissible, but it is considered that only a few wealthy men really need horses—men with distant lands or herds that must be visited frequently. The man who buys a horse without really needing it is considered to be "showing off." In the main, the methods of ostentatious consumption not only are communally recognized and approved but are restricted to specific social occasions. In ordinary life there is little to distinguish one Cherán man or family from another, if one except the very poor.

VALUE AND PRICE

435 The values of the major commodities and services in Cherán are expressed in monetary terms. Perhaps the only significant exceptions are the services rendered by relatives and *compadres* in connection with house moving and various fiestas, services rendered the community, and the goods which are exchanged at betrothals and weddings. In the latter case, wholly fictitious values are placed on the goods exchanged, but even here the equation is ultimately made to money values. With these

423 The individual ejido is a turn back to small exploitation. No technological improvements have been made, no credit is received from the Ejido Bank, and in some cases corn for subsistence is now grown instead of a former commercial crop. Collective ejidos, on the contrary, are financed by the Ejido Bank and are under its ultimate control. This is a good example of the state intervention in production which characterizes the present development of world economy.

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175 As stated when discussing the decline of the Indian village community in Michoacan, at the time of the Mexican Revolution, a number of haciendas were near the Tarascan region. Some villages had lost most of their lands and included great numbers of landless people. However, this is not typical of Tarascan villages. Most of them were and are villages of farmer-owners and craftsmen. Although most Tarascans had not lost lands to haciendas, private ownership of land prevailed and there was within the village noticeable inequality in wealth. Relatively large, medium and small landowners, sharecroppers, and landless laborers were to be found. In some towns outsiders owned a considerable amount of land. Consequently, the agrarian aspects of the Mexican Revolution, i. e., the fight to get land from the haciendas, have been mainly external to most Tarascan villages, and the agrarian conflict caused by inequality within the village assumed here a peculiar form.

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No good information is available as to the extent to which Tarascans participated in the armed conflicts, although some fought with agrarian revolutionists (Zapatistas and Villistas). The land tenure situation is reflected in the extent to which agrarian reforms have been carried out. Villages near haciendas have received ejidos, but the other villages have not, although agrarian conflicts also arose.

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All the existing ejidos are of the individual type. In only one case (Tarajero) was collective exploitation attempted for some time. The people of Tarajero petitioned for land in 1915, and finally received it in 1924. It was good fertile land in a drained swamp, and, while part of former haciendas, the land had been used for commercial production. The agraristas decided to exploit it collectively. It seems, however, that the directing committee began to appropriate most of the profits derived from the exploitation, reducing the rest of the

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2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P.206] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro

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[661] ejidatarios to the level of underpaid laborers. ("The committee and its gang are living off the work of the rest of the people.") The upshot was that the ejidatarios managed to obtain from the government the abandonment of the cooperative exploitation and the distribution of the land into personal parcels. No further information is available.[67]

Ejidos were also granted on the southern shores of Lake Pátzcuaro. Here, ejidos were first established around 1920. Later on some were enlarged and new ones set up during the late 'thirties. Napízaro (originally granted 1936, enlarged 1938), Erongarícuaro (granted 1918, enlarged 1936), Uricho (granted 1920, actual possession given 1930, enlarged 1936), Santa Ana (1934), Tzurumútaro (granted 1921, possession given 1930, enlarged 1937), are among the main agrarista villages.[68] Other villages like Arócutin and Puácuaro have also agrarista groups but no information is available as to ejidos granted.

All these ejidos are individual. Lands are distributed to members by furrows, Tarascan style, and each individual lot is small (not more than 2 hectares). The tilling of the land is done individually, although laborers are sometimes employed. The main crops are corn, wheat, and beans. No credit has been received from the Bank of Ejido Credit. Woodlands are owned in common by the ejido. Its members can exploit them freely, but non-members have to pay a fee.[69]

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In the Sierra and the Cañada towns there were no haciendas, and the granting of ejidos was not feasible. Only Tanaquillo in La Cañada had an ejido granted, in 1935.[70] In most villages, however, groups of peasants organized into agrarian committees in order to seize whatever lands they could — communal lands or those belonging to the richer landowners. These revolutionary groups formed armed guards by means of which they seized and kept power in their villages.[71]

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In some towns like those in La Cañada, Charapan and Urapicho, a great number of farmers had lost their lands to richer neighbors or to outsiders. Haciendas had not been formed, but there were much absentee landownership and concentration of property. The people fought to get their lands back.[72]

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67. *Ibid.*, 477*ff*.
68. Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 285–88.
69. *Ibid.*, 283–4.
70. *Ibid.*, 283.
71. *Ibid.*, 281; Sáenz, 1936, 22.
72. For Urapicho, Beals, 1946, 131.

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P.219] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro

175 In La Cañada the local revolt took place in 1918, led by people from Tanaquillo. The
423 lands which had fallen into the hands of
669 mestizos from Chilchota, Purépero and Tangancícuaro were recovered and distributed among the revolutionists. Only in 1932 was this reform legalized by the State government.[73] In other cases, medium farmers were the rule, and there is not a very great difference in property holdings. Nevertheless, agrarista groups were also organized. Most Sierra towns had groups of this sort.[74] Cherán and Jarácuaro, the two villages for which we have most information, belong to this type.

In these small towns, which legally had no ejidos, the agrarians took lands illegally either from richer villagers or from the communal lands. In all these villages where the majority of the people was not benefited, there was really a privileged group formed. The agraristas made themselves the only beneficiaries of the lands seized, or distributed them without satisfying the needs of other equally needy villagers who had not taken part in their movement.[75] When seizing lands to distribute among
[661] themselves, they sometimes took land belonging to other villagers merely because they had been political enemies.[76] They also seized formerly communal lands for their exclusive use. Hence villagers not belonging to the agrarista group were obliged to pay a fee to the agrarian committee *(Comisario ejidal)* in order to have access to the lands.[77]

423 In Jarácuaro, for instance, the rush
660 grounds were formerly owned by the villagers, who used the proceeds from selling the rushes for buying candlewax for the temple; afterwards the agraristas exploited the grounds for their personal use. A similar case occurred during our stay on the island. A lowering of the lake's water level had left dry some flat land of considerable agricultural value. The agrarista group was trying to get the land from the federal government for distribution among its members, while the rest of the village wanted to distribute it among all the villagers (excepting the eight agraristas). At the time of our leaving (1945), the authorities were persuading the villagers to distribute the land among all people of both groups.

73. Sáenz, 1936, 23-4; 96, 255-6; Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 291-2.
74. All but two, according to Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 289.
75. Sáenz, 1936, 256; also Tarejero, Simpson, 1937, 471-2.
76. Cañada, see Sáenz, 1936, 256; Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 281, 291-2.
77. Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 279, 281.

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
NU34 Tarasco NU34

SESIHÁNGARI

Historical Comment

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Tarascan kingdom extended into the present states of Jalisco, Colima, and Guerrero, and thereby reached its greatest limits of expansion. King Zuangua (called Singuangua in the following legend of Sesihángari) ruled over this vast area not only as the highest political authority but also as the representative and incarnation of the primordial god Curicaueri. Thus he had the twofold responsibility of ruling the country and maintaining the cult of the god.

In respect to this latter duty, the king had a woman known as the *quataperi* who supervised all the women of the royal household, including the group comprised of daughters of important men of the empire. These women passed their days preparing items to be used as offerings to the god and were permitted to leave the royal enclosure only at the time of fiestas.

The story of one of these young women is a Tarascan tradition that was carefully and secretly transmitted from generation to generation, never being disclosed to outsiders until the wars of revolution in the early nineteenth century. At that time it became known when the Indians openly applauded the noble virtues displayed by Sesihángari in the face of adversity. As thousands of their countrymen fell into more desperate circumstances, this legend was popularized. Sesihángari's acceptance of death for that which she held dear in the face of evil oppression became a staunch subject of reference for the nineteenth-century Indian revolutionaries.

The Legend

Sesihángari, the strikingly beautiful daughter of the cacique of Patamban, was brought to the Purépecha court. Upon her arrival in the royal city of Tzintzuntzan, the ladies of the court crowned her with flowers on the steps of the palace and dressed her in a